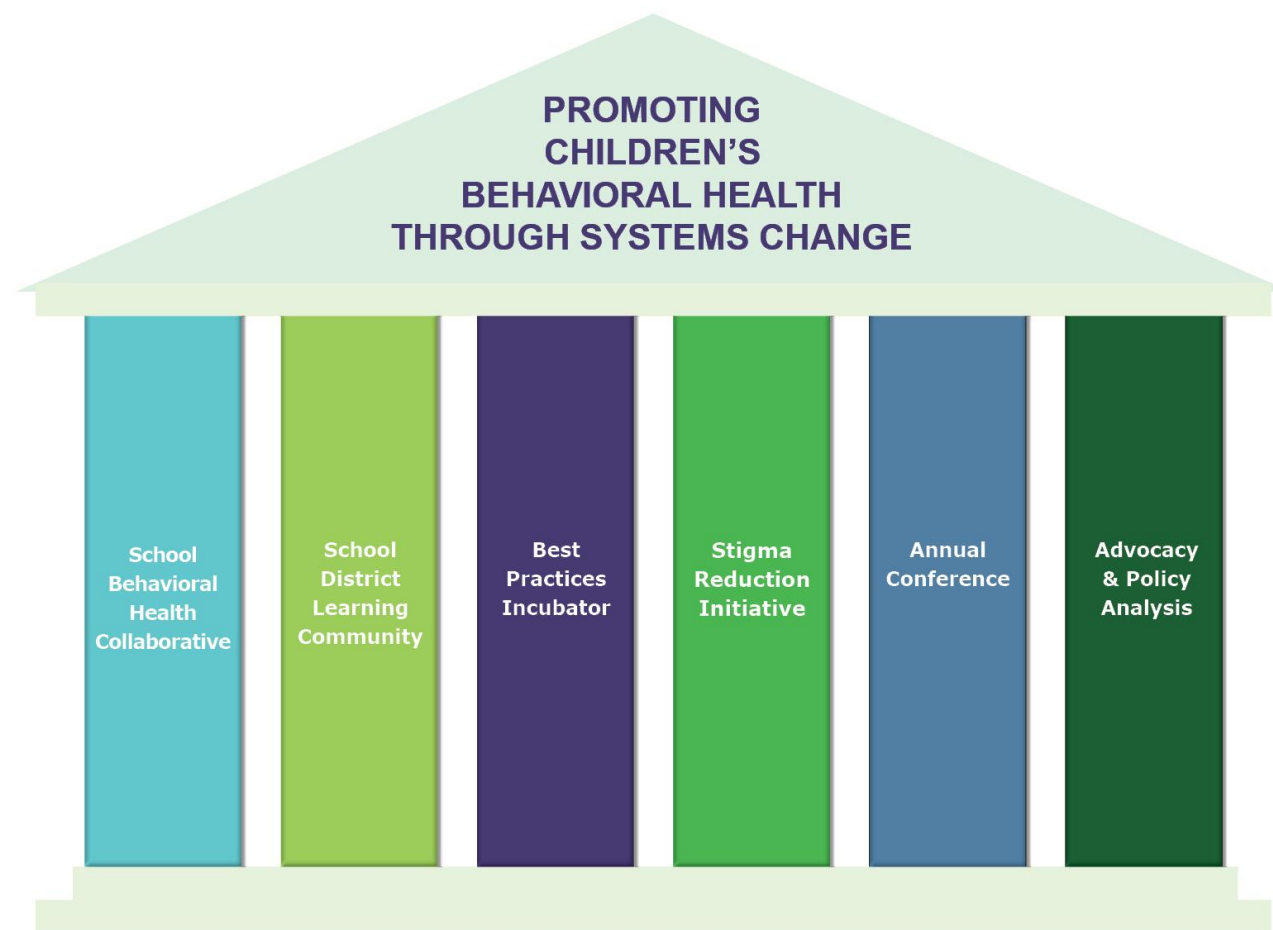


# Center for School Behavioral Health at Mental Health America of Greater Houston

Educator, parent and student  
toolkits, PSAs and more at:

[www.mhahouston.org/  
emotional-backpack-project](http://www.mhahouston.org/emotional-backpack-project)





**CENTER FOR** | MENTAL HEALTH AMERICA  
OF GREATER HOUSTON  
**SCHOOL BEHAVIORAL HEALTH**

In the fall of 2018 the Center for School Behavioral Health at Mental Health America of Greater Houston, in collaboration with UNICEF USA and the City of Houston Mayor's Office of Education, held a series of community conversations in each of Houston's City Council Districts to learn about the social and emotional challenges preventing youth from succeeding in the classroom after Hurricane Harvey. This infographic provides a snapshot of what was learned.

**11**

**COMMUNITY  
CONVERSATIONS**

**125**

**TOTAL  
PARTICIPANTS**

# COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS:

...Harvey

...Trauma

...Helping our kids cope



# Are the Kids Alright?



# What's happening?

How many children have a mental illness?  
**1 in 5 children have, or will have a serious  
mental illness.**

How many of these children receive treatment?  
**26%**

# What's happening?

What percentage of lifetime cases of mental illness begin by age 14?

**50%**

How many youth, by age 18, will have experienced at least one traumatic event in their lifetime?

**Approximately 2/3**

# So what did we find out?

## CONSENSUS: YOUTH ARE NOT DOING WELL ONE YEAR POST HARVEY



**45% OF DISTRICTS**  
reported a noticeable increase  
in anxiety among youth



**55% OF DISTRICTS**  
listed stigma surrounding mental  
health as a barrier to youth utilizing  
support services



**100% OF DISTRICTS**  
believe that it is difficult to find  
professional mental health  
supports in their community

# Trauma affects learning



## Adversely affects students' ability to ...

- Acquire language & communication skills
- Understand cause & effect
- Take another person's perspective
- Attend to classroom instruction
- Regulate emotions
- Engage the curriculum
- Utilize executive functions
  - Make plans
  - Organize work
  - Follow classroom rules



# Trauma affects school performance



- Excessive absences
- Underachievement
  - Lower scores on standardized achievement tests
  - Substantial decrements in IQ, reading achievement & language
- 2.5x more likely to be retained
- Suspended & expelled more often

# Trauma affects coping skills

- Increase in negative avoidance coping (e.g., drug, alcohol, tobacco use)
- Increase in anger coping strategies (e.g., blaming others, yelling, aggression, conduct disorder).
- Increase use of maladaptive coping strategies (e.g., seeking revenge, getting mad, using drugs)



**Trauma responses can last 2-5 years, with  
peak responses at 18 months.**





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## Discoveries

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Youth are experiencing  
**WEATHER-RELATED TRIGGERS**  
(e.g. when it rains for consecutive days)

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Main **SOURCES OF SUPPORT** have been  
from schools, churches, families, clubs,  
peers, websites, support groups, and  
social media

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**GEOGRAPHIC AND CULTURAL  
BARRIERS** have sometimes prevented  
residents of various districts from  
accessing services

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**SCHOOL COUNSELORS** have taken on  
the brunt of the work to support students,  
but they are often stretched thin by other  
administrative responsibilities (e.g.  
administering tests)





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## What Can We Do?

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- +** **MORE TRAINING FOR TEACHERS AND PARENTS** on the signs and symptoms of mental health issues and how to understand and respond to trauma/trauma-related behaviors
- **DECREASE STIGMA** associated with mental health challenges and illnesses
- +** **INCREASE** school-based mental health services
- +** Generate more opportunities for communities to **HAVE THEIR VOICES HEARD**
- +** Encourage teachers and parents to **ADDRESS THEIR OWN MENTAL HEALTH**
- +** **NORMALIZE ACCESS** to mental health services and make the services youth friendly



# MHA Platform 2019 Legislative Session

- Trauma training for educators
- Funding for counselors and behavioral health specialists on every campus



“We always believed in and were able to pull ourselves up by our bootstraps. **Harvey washed away the bootstraps.**”  
- Community Conversation participant, District D

